

**Fishery Management Plan for the Commercial
Tanner Crab Fishery in the South Peninsula District
of Registration Area J, 2009**

by

Mark A. Stichert

December 2008

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries



Symbols and Abbreviations

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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Measures (fisheries)	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative		fork length	FL
deciliter	dL	Code	AAC	mideye to fork	MEF
gram	g	all commonly accepted		mideye to tail fork	METF
hectare	ha	abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	standard length	SL
kilogram	kg			total length	TL
kilometer	km	all commonly accepted			
liter	L	professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	Mathematics, statistics	
meter	m			<i>all standard mathematical</i>	
milliliter	mL	at	@	<i>signs, symbols and</i>	
millimeter	mm	compass directions:		<i>abbreviations</i>	
		east	E	alternate hypothesis	H _A
		north	N	base of natural logarithm	<i>e</i>
		south	S	catch per unit effort	CPUE
		west	W	coefficient of variation	CV
		copyright	©	common test statistics	(F, t, χ^2 , etc.)
		corporate suffixes:		confidence interval	CI
		Company	Co.	correlation coefficient	
		Corporation	Corp.	(multiple)	R
		Incorporated	Inc.	correlation coefficient	
		Limited	Ltd.	(simple)	r
		District of Columbia	D.C.	covariance	cov
		et alii (and others)	et al.	degree (angular)	°
		et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	degrees of freedom	df
		exempli gratia		expected value	<i>E</i>
		(for example)	e.g.	greater than	>
		Federal Information		greater than or equal to	≥
		Code	FIC	harvest per unit effort	HPUE
		id est (that is)	i.e.	less than	<
		latitude or longitude	lat. or long.	less than or equal to	≤
		monetary symbols		logarithm (natural)	ln
		(U.S.)	\$, ¢	logarithm (base 10)	log
		months (tables and		logarithm (specify base)	log ₂ , etc.
		figures): first three		minute (angular)	'
		letters	Jan.,...,Dec	not significant	NS
		registered trademark	®	null hypothesis	H ₀
		trademark	™	percent	%
		United States		probability	P
		(adjective)	U.S.	probability of a type I error	
		United States of		(rejection of the null	
		America (noun)	USA	hypothesis when true)	α
		U.S.C.	United States	probability of a type II error	
			Code	(acceptance of the null	
		U.S. state	use two-letter	hypothesis when false)	β
			abbreviations	second (angular)	"
			(e.g., AK, WA)	standard deviation	SD
				standard error	SE
				variance	
				population	Var
				sample	var
Weights and measures (English)					
cubic feet per second	ft ³ /s				
foot	ft				
gallon	gal				
inch	in				
mile	mi				
nautical mile	nmi				
ounce	oz				
pound	lb				
quart	qt				
yard	yd				
Time and temperature					
day	d				
degrees Celsius	°C				
degrees Fahrenheit	°F				
degrees kelvin	K				
hour	h				
minute	min				
second	s				
Physics and chemistry					
all atomic symbols					
alternating current	AC				
ampere	A				
calorie	cal				
direct current	DC				
hertz	Hz				
horsepower	hp				
hydrogen ion activity	pH				
(negative log of)					
parts per million	ppm				
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰				
volts	V				
watts	W				

FISHERY MANAGEMENT REPORT NO. 08-58

**FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE COMMERCIAL TANNER
CRAB FISHERY IN THE SOUTH PENINSULA DISTRICT OF
REGISTRATION AREA J, 2009**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Western Section of the South Peninsula District will open for a commercial Tanner crab *Chionoecetes bairdi* fishery on January 15, 2009 with a guideline harvest level of 275,000 pounds. This document provides an overview of the harvest strategy for South Peninsula Tanner crab fishery. Information on tank inspection, inseason reporting, pot storage, landing requirements, gear operation hours, and contact personnel within the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is also provided. Harvesters are encouraged to use this document as a supplement to the 2008-2011 Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fishing Regulation booklet to understand the regulations governing this fishery.

Key words: Tanner crab, *Chionoecetes bairdi*, South Peninsula District, Area J, harvest strategy, regulations, guideline harvest level (GHL)

INTRODUCTION

AREA DESCRIPTION

The South Peninsula District of Registration Area J for Tanner crabs *Chionoecetes bairdi* includes all Pacific Ocean waters south of the Alaska Peninsula, west of the line from Kupreanof Point to the easternmost point of Castle Rock, then extending 135° southeast from the easternmost point of Castle Rock, and east of the longitude of Scotch Cap Light (Figure 1). The South Peninsula District is divided into two sections, the Eastern Section (all waters east of 162°W. long.) and the Western Section (all waters west of 162° W. long.). A full description of the district can be found at 5 AAC 35.505 DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRATION AREA J DISTRICTS on page 144 of the 2008-2011 Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fishing Regulations.

OVERVIEW

Commercial harvests of Tanner crab in the South Peninsula District began in 1967. The fishery grew quickly and by the 1972/73 season the annual harvest exceeded five million pounds. In response, guideline harvest levels (GHLs), fishery seasons, and crab size limits were implemented over the following three years. From 1979 through 1989 annual harvests ranged from almost nine million to one million pounds due to fluctuations in recruitment.

In the late 1980s, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) began a trawl survey to obtain abundance estimates and predict future recruitment trends of Tanner crabs in the South Peninsula District. Prior to this time, pot surveys were used for stock assessment (Urban et al. 1999). In 1989, ADF&G predicted a decline in recruitment based on analysis of the trawl survey and the fishery was closed from 1990 through 2000 due to the low abundance of legal-sized crab and the lack of recruitment.

In 1999, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted a comprehensive harvest strategy for Tanner crab in the South Peninsula District (5 AAC 35.507).

RECENT FISHERIES

2007 Fishery

Only the Western Section of the South Peninsula District met the required criteria for a commercial opening in 2007. The Western Section GHL was set at 200,000 pounds. The Eastern Section did not meet criteria for a 2007 Tanner crab fishery and remained closed to commercial fishing. Based on the GHL, the pot limit was 30 pots per vessel. The South Peninsula District

opened by regulation at noon on January 15 and closed by emergency order on February 11, 2007. Tanner crab harvest from the 2007 fishery, including deadloss and personal use, was approximately 165,213 pounds from 15 landings made by a total of 6 unique vessels.

2008 Fishery

Similar to 2007, only the Western Section met the required criteria for a commercial opening in 2008. The Western Section GHL was set at 250,000 pounds. The Eastern Section remained closed. Based on the GHL, the pot limit was set at 30 pots per vessel. The South Peninsula District opened by regulation at noon on January 15 and closed by emergency order on March 5, 2008. Nine vessels and two processors participated in the fishery. Tanner crab harvest, including deadloss and personal use, totaled approximately 235,841 pounds from 42 landings. The majority of harvest occurred in the Morzhovoi Bay area.

2009 GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVELS

Based on the 2008 ADF&G trawl assessment survey, the 2009 section GHLs in South Peninsula District for the commercial Tanner crab fishery are as follows:

<i>Section</i>	<i>2009 Guideline Harvest Level (pounds)</i>
Western	275,000
Eastern	CLOSED
South Peninsula District	275,000

REGULATIONS

OVERVIEW

State of Alaska Tanner crab regulations are in chapter 35 of the Alaska Administrative Code (AAC). Chapter 35 begins on page 124 of the 2008-2011 crab regulation booklet. Specific regulations that pertain to Tanner crab fisheries in Registration Area J begin on page 143. The harvest strategy, 5 AAC 35.507 KODIAK, CHIGNIK, AND SOUTH PENINSULA DISTRICTS, *C. BAIRDI* TANNER CRAB HARVEST STRATEGIES, can be found on pages 146-149. For information on additional regulations, contact the ADF&G office in Kodiak or refer to the crab regulations available at ADF&G offices or at <http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/>. The following is a summary of pertinent 2009 Tanner crab fishing regulations in the South Peninsula District, particularly those that have changed as a result of recent BOF actions.

- The South Peninsula District Tanner crab fishery is a nonexclusive registration fishery.
- The South Peninsula District has two sections, the Eastern Section (all waters east of 162°W. long.) and the Western Section (all waters west of 162° W. long.). Each section has a separate minimum threshold for Tanner crab and each section is managed separately under 5 AAC 35.507 KODIAK, CHIGNIK, AND SOUTH PENINSULA DISTRICTS *C. BAIRDI* TANNER CRAB, HARVEST STRATEGIES.

- Fishing gear may be operated for 10 hours each day from 8:00 AM to 5:59 PM. Baited gear may be left in the water for 14 hours from 6:00 PM to 7:59 AM each night, 5 AAC 35.510 FISHING SEASONS FOR REGISTRATION AREA J (c).
- A person or vessel that operates pot gear (e.g., cod pots, subsistence pots, etc.) 14 days prior to the South Peninsula District Tanner crab fishery opening may not participate in the upcoming commercial Tanner crab fishery, 5 AAC 35.053 OPERATION OF OTHER POT GEAR.
- A vessel may not operate groundfish pots while registered for the commercial Tanner crab fishery, including pots to catch cod for bait, 5 AAC 35.050 LAWFUL GEAR FOR TANNER CRAB. Cod caught as bycatch in crab pots may be used for bait.
- Only vessels 58' or less may participate in the commercial Tanner crab fishery in the South Peninsula District 5 AAC 35.590 VESSEL LENGTH RESTRICTIONS (b).

POT LIMITS AND BUOY TAGS

When the district GHL is less than 600,000 pounds, no more than 30 aggregate pots (including stored pots) may be operated by a validly registered Tanner crab vessel. With a total GHL of 275,000 pounds, the pot limit for the 2009 South Peninsula District Tanner crab fishery will be 30 pots per vessel.

Buoy tags will be available beginning in mid-December. A valid 2009 Tanner crab Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permit card is required to receive tags. Tags can be obtained at the ADF&G office in Kodiak and from department representatives in King Cove beginning approximately January 10. Participants can additionally obtain tags via U.S. Mail until December 31, 2008. No tags will be mailed after this date; call the ADF&G office in Kodiak for details at (907) 486-1840.

Replacement tags may be obtained by contacting ADF&G in Kodiak. The vessel owner, operator, or agent must complete an affidavit form describing how the tags were lost and supply the unique number(s) of each lost tag.

Pots with lost tags must be secured open with the bait removed until replacement tags are obtained. Vessel operators must contact Alaska State Troopers Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection to inform them of the situation (see Appendix A for contact information).

GEAR

Gear for the commercial Tanner crab fishery is limited to pots no more than 10 feet long by 10 feet wide by 42 inches high with rigid tunnel eye openings that are less than five inches (13 cm) in height. Tunnel eye opening perimeters must be individually more than 36 inches. Ring nets are not legal gear in the South Peninsula District for the commercial harvest of Tanner crabs. The specific language regarding legal pot dimensions can be found under 5 AAC 35.050 LAWFUL GEAR FOR TANNER CRAB on page 128 of the crab regulations.

ESCAPE MECHANISMS

Escape mesh or escape rings are required for Tanner pots. Each pot used to take Tanner crabs must have at least one third of one vertical surface of the pot composed of not less than 7-1/4 inch stretched mesh webbing or have no less than four circular escape rings which have an inside diameter of at least five inches. If using rings, they must be installed on the vertical plane of the

pot to allow for escapement of undersized crabs. The rings are not required to be placed within a certain distance from the bottom as they are in some Bering Sea fisheries. However, ADF&G recommends placing rings within one mesh of the bottom of the pot to optimize escapement of undersized crabs. The specific language on escape device requirements can be found under 5 AAC 35.525 LAWFUL GEAR FOR REGISTRATION AREA J on page 154 of the crab regulations.

All pots must be equipped with a biodegradable escape mechanism as described in 5 AAC 39.145 ESCAPE MECHANISM FOR SHELLFISH AND BOTTOMFISH POTS on page 59 of the crab regulations. An opening 18 inches or greater in length that is placed within six inches of the bottom of the pot must be laced, sewn, or secured together by a single length of untreated, 100 percent cotton twine no larger than 30 thread.

BUOY TAGS AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS

Buoys attached to pots must comply with 5 AAC 35.051 TANNER CRAB GEAR MARKING REQUIREMENTS listed on page 128 and 5 AAC 35.526 TANNER CRAB POT MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION AREA J on page 155 of the crab regulations. The buoy that contains the ADF&G number may not be marked with additional numbers; however, symbols and letters are acceptable on this buoy. Trailer or other buoys used to mark ownership or string sequence may be marked with any desired numbers, symbols, or letters.

The use of converted pots as ‘storage boxes’ to store crabs in the water for vessels registered as dry tanked vessels is not permitted unless crab storage devices are attached to the vessel at all times.

OPERATION OF OTHER POT GEAR, POT STORAGE, AND LANDING REQUIREMENTS

There is a 14-day stand down period for the operation of pot gear prior to the commercial Tanner crab fishery opening in the South Peninsula District. No person or vessel intending to participate in the commercial Tanner crab fishery may operate commercial, subsistence, sport, or personal use pots for any species within the district during the 14-day stand down period.

Legal Tanner crab pots with buoy tags attached may be placed into shallow water storage during the 14-day stand down period. Up to 30 pots may be stored prior to the season in waters of 25 fathoms or less with all bait and bait containers removed and the doors secured fully open (or not secured closed for cone or pyramid pots; (5 AAC 35.527(3) & 5 AAC 35.052). However, vessels may not retrieve gear already in legal storage to attach buoy tags during the 14-day stand down period. In addition, vessels may not retrieve gear from storage during the 24-hour period after tank inspection, but before the fishery opening, due to enforcement concerns. At the time of tank inspection, all gear onboard and in the water must have buoy tags affixed.

No vessel may have more than the specified pot limit onboard or in wet storage in the registration district while the vessel is validly registered. The regulatory language concerning pot storage can be found at 5 AAC 35.527 TANNER CRAB POT STORAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION AREA J on page 156 of the crab regulations.

After the closure of the Tanner crab season, vessels wishing to participate in the Pacific cod fishery must either place pots into shallow-water storage or on land and register with ADF&G for the cod fishery. Additional stipulations on the operation of other pot gear within the South Peninsula District can be found under 5 AAC 35.053 OPERATION OF OTHER POT GEAR on page 129 of the crab regulations.

SUMMARY OF CLOSURE SCENARIOS

Delivery requirements, post-closure pot storage requirements, and re-registration requirements vary depending on the type of area closure (entire or partial section) and the amount of advance notice given for the closure. The following is a summary of closure scenarios, subsequent pot storage options, delivery requirements, and re-registration requirements contained in 5 AAC 35.030, 5 AAC 35.031, 5 AAC 35.052, 5 AAC 35.527, and 5 AAC 35.556.

Closure of the entire section with 6 or more hours advance notice of the closure given.

In 2009, the Eastern Section is closed; therefore, closure of the Western Section is the same as an entire district closure and regulations for the district closure will apply.

- Vessel operators are required to deliver all catch from the section within 24 hours of the closure.
- All pots must be unbaited at the time of the closure.
- In the South Peninsula District, pots may be stored in the water without bait up to **7 days** after the closure of the commercial Tanner crab season (5 AAC 35.527 (3)).

Closure of the entire section with less than 6 hours advance notice of the closure given.

- Vessel operators are required to proceed directly to port at the time of the closure and deliver within 24 hours.
- Vessel operators may not place gear in storage or retrieve pots from storage until they have completed their delivery of crabs from the closed section.
- Vessel operators are required to return to the fishing grounds within 72 hours after their delivery to ‘rail dump’ all crab from baited gear left on the grounds.

Partial closure of a fishing section with 6 or more hours advance notice of the closure given.

This situation occurs when bays or other specific areas within the Western Section close prior to closure of the entire section.

- Vessel operators may be required to deliver all crabs from the section within 24 hours of the closure. Any changes to the delivery requirement would be provided in a news release at the time of the closure announcement.
- Pot gear in the closed area of the section must be unbaited at the time of the closure.
- Vessel operators may store pots in waters deeper than 25 fathoms for 72 hours in the closed waters of the section.
- Vessel operators may place, or simultaneously have, baited gear in the open waters of the same section before delivery provided the 24 hour delivery deadline is met.

Partial closure of a fishing section with less than 6 hours advance notice of the closure given.

This scenario is unlikely. Should this type of closure occur, the landing, pot storage, and re-registration requirements will be provided in a news release.

Vessel operators wishing to deliver to ports outside the South Peninsula District are required to contact the ADF&G office in Kodiak, or ADF&G personnel in King Cove if available, before leaving the district. Vessels delivering outside the district must provide the estimated number of crabs onboard the vessel at the time of the closure, location of port and processing facility, and estimated time of arrival. Additional requirements exist for catcher-processors and vessels mechanically disabled. Cases of delay due to circumstances of weather will be addressed on an individual basis (5 AAC 35.031 TANNER CRAB LANDING REQUIREMENTS page 126-127 of the crab regulations).

VESSEL SIZE RESTRICTIONS, REGISTRATION, TENDERS, AND TANK INSPECTIONS

Tanner crab may not be taken in the South Peninsula District by vessels greater than 58 feet in overall length (5 AAC 35.590 (b)) VESSEL LENGTH RESTRICTIONS page 158 of the crab regulations). Vessel operators participating in the 2009 South Peninsula Tanner crab fishery must have a 2009 permit card for Alaska Peninsula (T09M) Tanner crab and a current 2009 commercial vessel license. Permits and vessel licenses can be obtained from the CFEC in Juneau (Appendix A).

Tender vessels must register with ADF&G before beginning tendering operations. Tender vessels may not have a pot-hauling block or other crab fishing gear (e.g. pots) onboard nor may they be used to harvest Tanner crab (5 AAC 35.033).

A tank inspections is required for a vessel with a circulating sea water system to confirm crabs are not onboard the vessel prior to the opening. Circulating sea water systems include on-deck containers with water circulated by pumps, hoses, or other means. Pot gear will also be inspected at the time of tank inspection to ensure it is in compliance with all gear regulations. Tanks will be inspected beginning at 12:00 NOON on January 14 in King Cove. Upon completion of the tank and gear inspection process, a valid 2009 shellfish registration will be issued to the vessel. A copy of this registration must remain onboard the vessel while fishing. This registration becomes invalid 24 hours after the closure of the fishery. Vessels must invalidate their registration before participating in other fisheries if the Tanner fishery remains open.

SIZE LIMIT

The legal minimum size of Tanner crabs that can be harvested in the South Peninsula District is 5.5 inches (140 mm) carapace width (CW). Only legal-size male crabs can be retained; all other crabs incidentally captured must be immediately returned to the water unharmed. This includes king crab, as they cannot be legally taken for subsistence purposes in a commercial Tanner crab fishery.

INSEASON FISHERY MANAGEMENT

ADF&G may manage bays and offshore areas separately, closing one portion of a section while allowing continued harvest in other locations within the same section. The department will manage such that harvest within bays or localized areas does not exceed available harvest based on department survey results. This may require a short advance notice closure inside bays or other inshore areas.

As in previous fisheries, much of the estimated legal biomass is unevenly distributed (Figure 2). Fishery performance as measured by catch per unit effort (CPUE) of legal crabs, undersized, and female crabs will be closely monitored. As the stocks within the South Peninsula District are still rebuilding, closures may occur before the total GHF is achieved if CPUE indicates the number of legal-sized males has substantially declined or if excessive handling of sublegal and female crabs is occurring. The regulatory season closure date is March 31.

VOLUNTEER CATCH REPORTING

ADF&G will manage the South Peninsula District commercial Tanner crab fishery from inseason catch reports provided by fishers. Inseason reports allow for real-time fishery management and the ability to consider changes in effort, fleet behavior, and weather. ADF&G will make every effort to allow sufficient time for fishers to configure gear for storage or to place gear onboard before a closure; however, the potential exists for a short advance notice closure.

Any validly registered vessel may participate in the reporting process and each registering vessel will be issued a 2009 reporting code and worksheet at registration. Reports will be taken over marine VHF channel 6 (King Cove), single sideband (SSB) 4125 kHz, telephone, satellite dispatch system, and e-mail. The ADF&G Kodiak office has both Matrix¹ (**7894**) and Stratos¹ (**0083**) dispatch services. Vessel operators will be asked during the registration process which method they will use to submit daily reports.

Contents of the daily report will contain confidential codes for the following information: statistical area fished, number of pot lifts, and number of crabs retained for each 10-hour fishing period. Reports will be initially taken at 6:30 PM daily and may be transmitted via SSB, marine telex, e-mail, satellite dispatch, and satellite or cell phone. If a partial closure of the section occurs, the department may change the reporting schedule to 9:00 AM for the remainder of the fishing season.

ADF&G will update the fleet on SSB 4125 kHz with the fishery status each morning at 8:30 AM. Any closure announcement or change in the reporting schedule will be made on this frequency. Current fishery status will also be available on the ADF&G recorded information phone at 486-4559, option 2. Messages on the recorded information phone will be updated daily after the 8:30 AM updates. Inseason updates, changes to the reporting schedule, and closure announcements will additionally be distributed via e-mail, FAX, and communicated directly to all participating processing facilities.

¹ Use of trade names does not constitute an endorsement by ADF&G.

REFERENCES CITED

Urban, D., D. Pengilly, D. Jackson, and I. Vining. 1999. A Tanner crab harvest strategy for Kodiak, Chignik, and the South Peninsula Districts. A Report to the Board of Fisheries. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Regional Information Report 4K99-21, Kodiak.

FIGURES

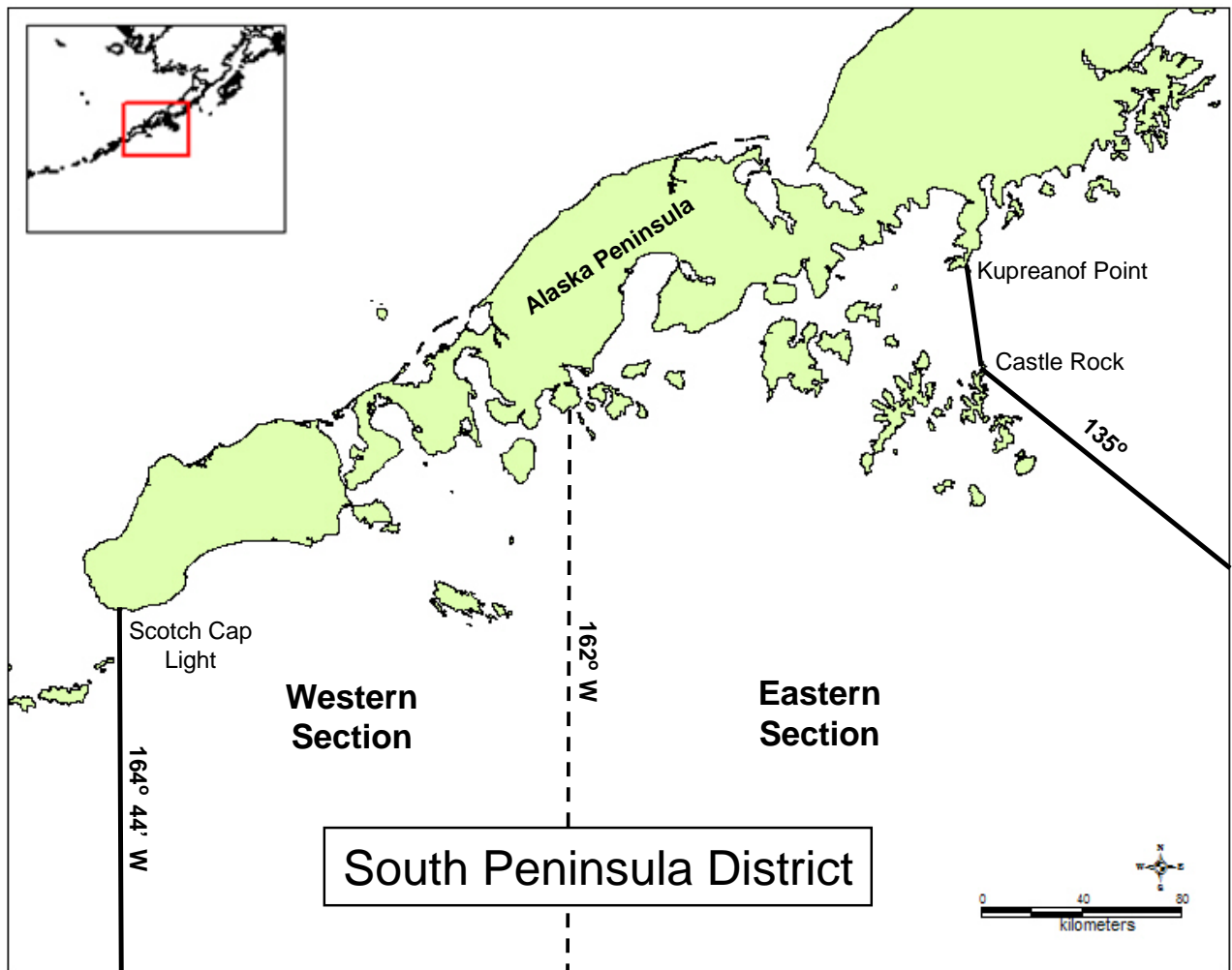


Figure 1.—South Peninsula Tanner crab District and Sections, 2009.

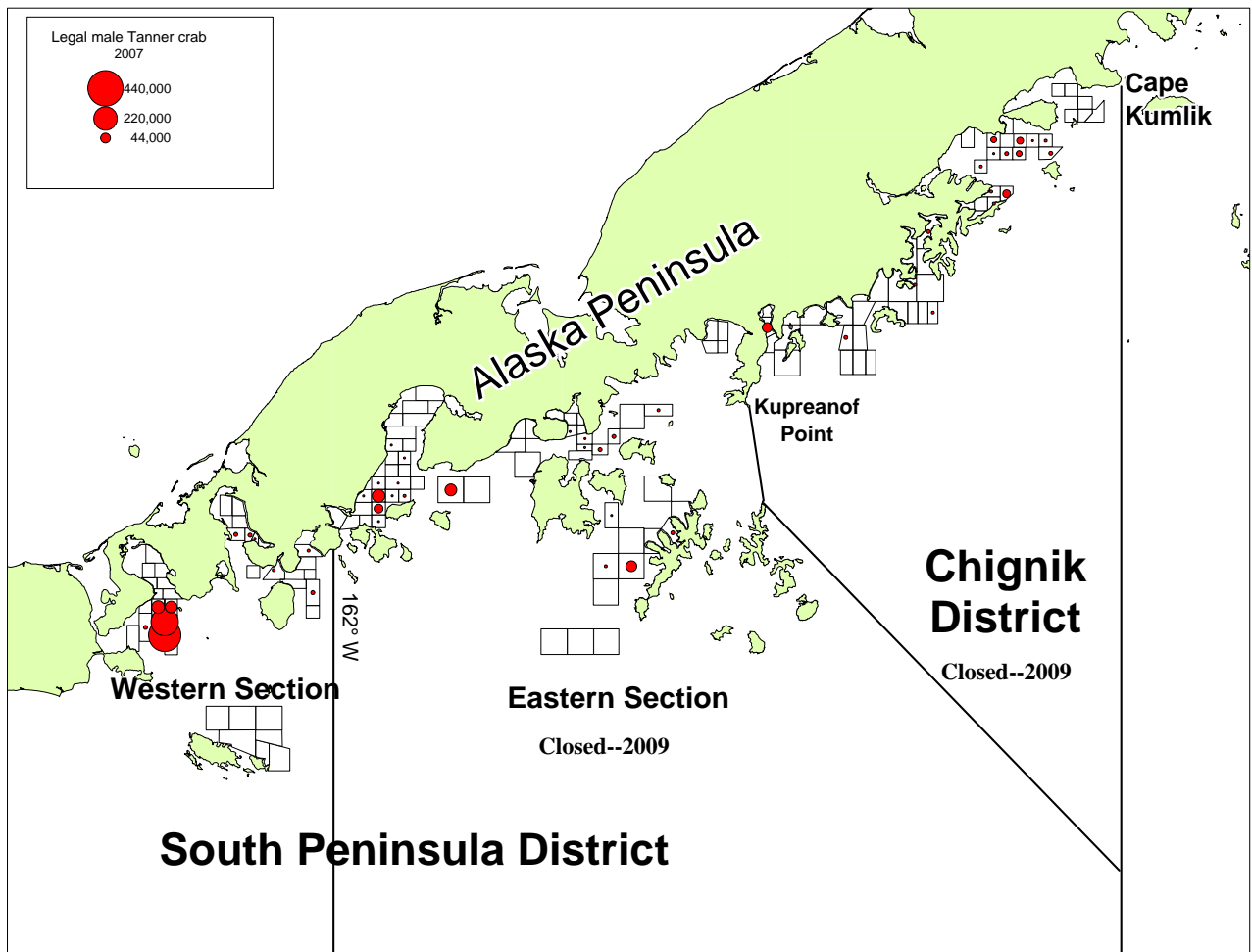


Figure 2.—Population estimates of legal-size Tanner crabs in the Chignik and South Peninsula Districts from the 2007 trawl survey.

**APPENDIX A. LIST OF FISHERY CONTACTS BY
AGENCY AND LOCATION**

Appendix A1.–List of fishery contacts, by agency and location.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game		web site: http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region4/rgn4home.php		
<u>Kodiak Office</u>				
Mail Address:	211 Mission Road Kodiak, Alaska 99615	Physical Address:	211 Mission Road 2 nd floor, Kodiak	Phone: (907) 486-1840 Record-A-Phone: (907) 486-4559 FAX : (907) 486-1824
Wayne Donaldson	Westward Region Shellfish/Groundfish Biologist			wayne.donaldson@alaska.gov
Nick Sagalkin	Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Area Shellfish/Groundfish Biologist			nick.sagalkin@alaska.gov
Mark Stichert	Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Asst. Area Shellfish/Groundfish Biologist			mark.stichert@alaska.gov
Kally Spalinger	Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Shellfish/Groundfish Biologist			kally.spalinger@alaska.gov
<u>Dutch Harbor Office</u>				
Mail Address:	P. O. Box 920587 Dutch Harbor, Alaska 99692	Physical Address:	F.T.S. building, 2 nd floor Airport Beach Road, Dutch Harbor.	Phone: (907) 581-1239 FAX: (907) 581-1572
Forrest Bowers	Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area Biologist			forrest.bowers@alaska.gov
Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection		web site: http://www.dps.state.ak.us/AWT/		
<u>Kodiak Office</u>				
Mail Address:	2921 A Mill Bay Road Kodiak, Alaska 99615	Physical Address:	2921 A Mill Bay Road Kodiak, AK	Phone: (907) 486-4762 FAX: (907) 486-5480
Sargent Lonnie Gonzales	Post Sargent	lonnie.gonzales@alaska.gov		
Paul Fussey	Trooper	paul.fussey@alaska.gov		
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission		web site: http://www.cfec.state.ak.us/		
<u>Juneau Office</u>				
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